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SUBJECT: Tripartite Plus: Coordinator's Visit to Kinshasa

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador Joyce Leader, Senior Coordinator of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, traveled to Kinshasa June 22-23 as part of a regional trip to Tripartite Plus capitals. Her schedule included meetings with Foreign Minister Mbusa, CHOD Kayembe, Presidential Envoy Seraphin Ngwej, and SRSR Doss. Topics for discussion centered around the key Tripartite subjects of re-establishment of diplomatic relations, return of refugees, ending the threat posed by armed groups, and information exchange. End summary.

Meeting with Presidential Envoy Seraphin Ngwej

¶2. (SBU) Leader emphasized to Ngwej the importance that Washington places on the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the DRC and the other members of the Tripartite Plus. Ngwej noted that everything is on track for normalization of relations with Uganda and Burundi.

¶3. (SBU) As for Rwanda, according to Ngwej, it is difficult for President Kabila to agree to re-establish relations at this time; the GDRC believes that Rwanda is re-occupying its territory by other means, through the CNDP. The bottom line for the GDRC is that Rwanda must stop supporting Nkunda. Ngwej stressed that the only leverage the DRC has with respect to Rwanda is the normalization of diplomatic relations, a point which Leader questioned. Leader also pointed out that Rwanda denies the charge of support for the CNDP, and asked how we can move forward on this issue. She suggested distinguishing between political and technical issues associated with renewing full diplomatic relations. Proceeding with technical aspects, such as sending a GDRC team to Kigali to determine what needs to be done to restore diplomatic compounds, could signal the GDRC's intention to move the process forward. Ngwej stressed that the high-level engagement and "moral force" of the USG is required and suggested a summit between the Presidents of the DRC and Rwanda, presided over by POTUS.

¶4. (SBU) Leader subsequently asked if the GDRC is making preparations for the return of refugees. Ngwej said this work is ongoing, but also underlined that the places of origin of many refugees are in areas with tenuous security situations, which the GDRC would like to resolve before they return. Leader asked if the DRC was preparing for the UNHCR-led working groups on refugee return with Burundi and Rwanda, similar to that launched recently with Uganda. Ngwej noted that the GDRC needs a better idea of the number of Congolese refugees in other countries and that UNHCR can be used as a reference point on this issue. (Note: Delegations of refugee experts from Rwanda, DRC, and UNHCR agreed July 3 in Kigali to form a technical working group, establish secure refugee return zones, and to register Rwandan refugees in the DRC. End note).

¶5. (SBU) On the issue of armed groups, Ngwej provided information on what the GDRC is doing to combat them, but also pled a lack of resources for military action. Notably, he raised the draining

economic effects of the December 2007 offensive against Nkunda. Still, he promised that the GDRC will put maximum pressure on the LRA, per the agreement at the recent Dar-Es-Salaam summit. With respect to the FDLR, Ngwej said there are certain encouraging signs, such as Rwanda agreeing to drop its focus on the long list of genocidaires. He also expressed appreciation for the Rewards for Justice program since it clearly outlines which individuals are specifically wanted by the ICTR.

¶6. (SBU) The most significant problem for the GDRC now is relocation of disarmed and demobilized FDLR elements within Congo, particularly following the Kisangani conference. Local populations have generally expressed opposition to resettling former FDLR members within their communities. Leader observed that the Kisangani "roadmap" appeared to prioritize relocation within Congo over return to Rwanda. Ngwej responded that the GDRC believes such relocation will be temporary, serving to break the links between combatants and their commanders while increasing their interest in returning to Rwanda. At the same time, he confessed that the GDRC does not have sufficient resources available to provide for the regroupment and resettlement of these ex-combatants.

¶7. (SBU) Leader brought up the subject of information sharing among the Tripartite Plus countries and its importance to the U.S. She asked if the Tripartite fusion cell is the best mechanism for this activity, noting the lack of engagement of countries in the project. Ngwej said that the GDRC could possibly support the idea of a "virtual" cell (Note: whereby the countries could continue to exchange information, but without the physical headquarters of the current cell. End note). However, he opposed the idea of moving the cell from Kisangani to Goma, for the reason that the GDRC would find it difficult to guarantee the security of its personnel in Goma, described by Ngwej as much more volatile than Kisangani.

Meeting with Foreign Minister Mbusa

¶8. (SBU) Leader also stressed to Mbusa the importance the U.S. places on the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Tripartite Plus countries. Mbusa agreed and said that Kabila must be persuaded to take appropriate action on this issue with respect to Rwanda. He said the U.S. should encourage Kabila to move forward on this issue. Like Ngwej, Mbusa suggested a summit between the Presidents of the DRC and Rwanda, presided over by POTUS. At the same time, Mbusa underlined that Rwanda needs to halt its support for Nkunda, which would in turn remove the DRC rationale for refusing to normalize relations with Kigali.

¶9. (SBU) Mbusa also highlighted the difficulties the GDRC is having in identifying DRC relocation sites for demobilized FDLR-RUD elements in the aftermath of the Kisangani conference, given local resistance. He outlined a plan he had proposed for temporary re-location in North Kivu that he claimed had President Kabila's support. He insisted, however, that relocation should not be the first option and questioned the priority ascribed to relocation by the Kisangani roadmap.

Meeting with CHOD Kayembe

¶10. (SBU) Leader focused the meeting with Kayembe on the issue of information sharing and action against armed groups. Kayembe noted that the GDRC has deployed eight battalions in the Kivus to put pressure on the FDLR. However, the cost of transporting military units to the area is causing a great deal of difficulty for the FARDC. He stressed the need for U.S. assistance in military training, as well as for a special operations capability and additional helicopters in order to fight the FDLR effectively. Kayembe also noted that the GDRC is sending three battalions to Dungu to put pressure on the LRA.

¶11. (SBU) Leader asked Kayembe's opinion on the fusion cell, noting that U.S. funding for this mechanism will soon come to an end. Kayembe said that the fusion cell has helped in GDRC operations against negative forces, but agreed that a mechanism that can make even better use of shared information would be useful.

Meeting with SRSG Doss

¶12. (SBU) SRSG Doss, accompanied by MONUC Force Commander General Gaye, stressed the need for MONUC to continue training FARDC battalions deployed against the FDLR. Doss said that those FARDC units which are MONUC-trained are doing well, but MONUC must continue follow-up training and mentorship to ensure sustainability.

In addition, Doss expressed the need for better intelligence and special operations capabilities for MONUC, along with a surge capacity. He pointed out that additional MONUC troops will be required to provide security as the disengagement and brassage processes begin.

¶13. (SBU) Doss stressed the need to determine the modalities for receiving and relocating demobilized FDLR-RUD elements. At the same time, he cautioned against relocation as a first option. He raised the idea of providing a resettlement grant as an incentive to return to Rwanda. On the Goma process, Doss expressed concern that all sides will talk themselves into a crisis. He underlined the need for Rwanda to put some pressure on Nkunda to show flexibility, and hinted that the U.S. also needs to push both Nkunda and Rwanda on this issue.

Meeting with MONUC Stabilization Plan Team

¶14. (SBU) Lise Grande, Stabilization Plan coordinator, noted that facilitating the return of Banyamulenge refugees to the DRC is one of the key benchmarks in allowing MONUC to withdraw. Johan Peleman of MONUC's Joint Mission Analysis Cell explained that the constant focus on refugee return from Rwanda to North Kivu masks the more complicated question of Banyamulenge return to South Kivu, where there is a great deal of animosity directed towards this group.

¶15. (SBU) On police reform, Grande noted that the United Nations Office for Project Services is helping build housing for police units along recently opened axes in the east. Beyond this, MONUC is providing for police training, as well as assistance in the areas of logistics, transport, and food provisions.

¶16. (U) Ambassador Leader has cleared this cable.

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